

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 11, 2004

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Searcy Ewell
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Pierre Curry
Jim Hill

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Jim Adams
John Barnett
Maria Morais

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Donna Hunt
Ramona Sangalli
Buddy Spivey

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Tom Gay

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Jim Pearson, Donna Hartzell, Kandy Cayce, Lyndel Lybarger, Kara Mahan, Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Larry Wayland, Carolyn Holbrook, Chris McKenzie

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mrs. Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mrs. Nola McKinney to approve the agenda. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the motion.

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF 06/12/04 MINUTES. Motion to approve as amended, was made by Mr. Searcy Ewell. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the motion to approve the minutes as amended. *Motion passed.*

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT -

REAUTHORIZATION - The federal Rehabilitation Act may not be reauthorized until January. Consumer and related groups are keeping track of this. There are some things being considered that may not be in the best interest of Rehab agencies and the consumers they serve.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT – Nationally, rehabilitation seems to be heading more and more toward the federal Department of Education.

HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT (HAVA) – DSB Director serves on a large committee to advise Secretary of State Charlie Daniels and others about voting issues in Arkansas. Currently, Pulaski County has a touch-screen voting machine that can be accessed by blind persons and will be available for early and regular voting. By 2006, blind individuals statewide will have accessible voting. Hopefully this will increase the number of blind people throughout the nation who do vote. As a member of the HAVA Committee, I was somewhat disappointed that the Committee did not recommend that all counties be required to provide accessible voting sooner, but, there was a lot of controversy on what kind of machines to use.

JUMPSTART – Twenty students participated in the three-week program this year with very positive results.

ANNUAL VENDORS' MEETING - The Randolph Shepherd Vendors of Arkansas held their annual meeting in August. Issues discussed were the same concerns affecting snack bars throughout the country. The program is seeking new ventures and evaluating new proposals, such as a bookstore. The Vending Program is losing more and more private locations as businesses are impacted by the economy.

RSA ANNUAL REVIEW – The required annual review was conducted by RSA in May. We have not received the final report, but are expecting it any day.

BUDGET – DSB is in a crunch for state money to match existing and additional federal funds. During the 2005 legislative budget process, DSB will ask for more appropriation (permission to spend) federal funds, but no additional general revenue. As federal funds increase, DSB has less and less general revenue not already committed for match. Shortly, DSB will be forced to turn back federal funds due to the inability to match them.

OLDER BLIND PROGRAM – The Older Blind Program continues to grow in the number of consumers being served. DSB is currently seeking a Medicaid Waiver to increase funds so that services can be provided to a broader population more timely.

REORGANIZATION – DSB anticipates being subject to some form of reorganization in the next legislative session, possibly involving transfer to the Department of Workforce Education or Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Reorganization did not pass during the last meeting of the General Assembly. Under that proposal, DSB was to be “spun off” from the Department of Human Services. However, though we heard that we were likely going to the Department of Workforce Education, DSB never showed up on any published organization chart. If and when any reorganization bill is filed affecting DSB in the upcoming session, the board and consumer groups must take a close look to make sure services to blind persons are protected in terms of the proposed organizational structure.

DSB STATEWIDE MEETING - The annual meeting of DSB staff statewide is scheduled in two weeks in Hot Springs. A fish fry is scheduled Thursday night in honor of the DSB Employees of the Year.

FAYETTEVILLE DSB OFFICE – Both vacancies have finally been filled. A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor starts Monday, and hopefully a new Rehabilitation Assistant starts the following Monday.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

ORDER OF PROGRAM FUNDING – All state agencies are being asked to ensure they have a defined plan of funding priorities in the event state funds must be diverted to support adequate Education as required under recent state law. ACT 481 of 1983, which established DSB, requires the agency to maximize federal funds in the delivery of services to blind and severely visually impaired consumers. Chairman Johnson named Nola McKinney, Sharon Berry, Searcy Ewell, Jim Hill and Pierre Curry to the DSB Order of Program Funding Committee. Katy Morris will serve as staff to the committee. The committee planned to meet via teleconference.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) – No representative was present. No report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) - No representative was present. A report is contained in the board packet.

CONSUMER INPUT – Mrs. McKinney gave a report on the Annual Meeting of the American Council of the Blind held in Birmingham in July. She thanked the Board for sponsoring her attendance. Major topics of discussion included transportation and technology. Updates were given by numerous consumer and service organizations advancing the rights of and benefits to blind and visually impaired persons.

Schedule of Next Meeting - December 11, 2004 at the Donaghey Plaza South Building, 700 Main Street, First floor Conference Rooms A & B at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nola McKinney
Secretary